

## WaterAid Bangladesh country programme evaluation

This briefing note summarises an external evaluation of WaterAid's Bangladesh programme carried out in November and December 2012. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the WaterAid Bangladesh country programme and the prospects for it to deliver sustainable change in relation to national context and strategic priorities.

This is the first WaterAid evaluation in Bangladesh for many years as the annual reviews of the Advancing Sustainable Environmental Health (ASEH) project, undertaken by the Department for International Development (DFID), were seen as effectively reviewing the WaterAid Bangladesh programme. Since the end of ASEH in 2009, WaterAid Bangladesh has worked on a diverse set of programmes in support of continued service delivery and capacity building for communities and local government institutions. This was firstly under the Enhancing Environmental Health by Community Organisations (EEHCO) project and then through the urban and rural water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes. It also looked at emerging issues such as climate change, inclusion and WASH in small towns.

The overall view of the evaluation team is a very positive one. The programme combines delivery of WASH services to millions in rural and urban locations with innovation in technology, inclusion of the most marginalised people, post-Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and rights-based approaches to long-term WASH sustainability.

### Bangladesh context

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world a population of 164 million people, and an estimated 1,142 people per square kilometre. The population is 70% rural but the urban population is growing by 6% each year. Nearly 50% of children under five are malnourished and 36% of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day. Increasing poverty rates and a lack of effective systems and structures for targeted service delivery for poor and marginalised people have yielded inequitable development. Though infant mortality is declining, rates are still high and, in most cases, due to preventable diseases linked to a lack of access to safe water, sanitation and poor hygiene practices. Poor people continue to remain poor as they pay more in relative terms for services eg for water supply in cities. Girls are often deprived of a bright future as they drop out of school due to a lack of girl-friendly latrines, which are needed especially during menstruation. The agricultural sector is the largest driving force for economic development in the country but is under constant threat from natural disasters, global competition, poor infrastructure and lack of employment opportunities.

Migration to city areas for the sake of employment has become a common trend. In some cases, women and children are left behind to shoulder most of the domestic

responsibilities. As a result of migration, city slums are increasingly exposed to population pressure and the growing crisis of income poverty. Bangladesh's natural resources are increasingly being degraded. Environmental pollution is on the rise from industrial waste, unsafe sewage disposal and sludge management problems. Water supply is becoming more challenging with ground water arsenic, increasing salinity in the coastal belt and overstressing of ground water for agriculture and industrial use, causing a sharp decline in ground water levels. In rural areas, access to improved sanitation has increased – though sustainability and climate influence emerging challenges. Access to improved sanitation in urban areas is still deteriorating due to increasing rates of urbanisation and the huge influx of economically disadvantaged people in urban cities.

The updated Sector Development Plan (2011) is the key government strategic planning document that consolidates multiple policies and goals into a ten- year framework. It gives greater emphasis to hygiene promotion and services for hard to reach parts of the community than the original Sector Development Plan. The Government has demonstrated commitment to improving WASH by more than doubling its allocations for water and sanitation in its Annual Development Programme budget; from an average of 2.5% during 2000-2007 to 5.8% in 2010-2011. However, there are inequities in the relative levels of investment visible in the plan, resulting in significant focus on urban areas and a smaller proportion in rural areas, despite the population weightings being opposite. Whilst there are arguments for higher investment in urban areas due to costs, there are also several highly vulnerable rural areas (such as coastal and hill track areas) that require significant investment.

The March 2012 UN Joint Monitoring Programme report suggests that Bangladesh will meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7, with 81% of people having access to safe drinking water by 2015 (better than the world average). However, the 2010 World Development Report highlighted in its more severe climate change scenarios that rising seas would inundate 18% of Bangladesh. They also expect more frequent storm surges and tidal floods, resulting in devastating impacts on water and sanitation infrastructure, increasing waterlogging and increasing water- and vector-borne diseases. Programmes to deal with this are currently limited, as are programmes to deal with the social and geographical exclusion that is another important barrier to attaining universal coverage. WaterAid Bangladesh is seeking to help cross these barriers.

### **Bangladesh's country programme**

Since the end of the EEHCO project in 2011, WaterAid Bangladesh has been delivering a diverse set of programmes with different sources of financial support that will run to between 2014 and 2017:

- Urban WASH: SIDA 80% (WaterAid Bangladesh 20% match funding)
- Rural WASH: SDC, HSBC and WaterAid
- Small towns: Thames Water

- Climate change: SDC and Unilever
- Inclusion: SCF (Finland), SDC, HSBC and WaterAid

ASEH																
EEHCO																
Small Towns																
Rural WaSH																
Urban WaSH																
Inclusion																
Climate Change																
I&E																
YEAR	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	

The **urban** programme, started in November 2011, will run for five years and is being implemented with four partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna. The programme focuses exclusively on urban poor people including women, children, older and disabled people. A total of almost 340,000 people are expected to benefit with domestic WASH as well as nearly 1.7 million commuters and members of the public through the use of mobile and static public toilets.

About 65% of the **rural** programme is working in post-ASEH areas, consolidating the achievements of ASEH, addressing deteriorating water resources and introducing post-CLTS approaches to sanitation now that the pits introduced during CLTS are filling up. Where possible, the programme focuses on hard to reach areas and areas with lower WASH coverage. It is an ambitious programme in terms of service delivery and capacity building for a wide range of stakeholders including local government institutions. They are on target for WASH users with over 90,000 people getting access to safe drinking water and over 220,000 to improved sanitation facilities. Over 125,000 people were reported to have adopted improved hygiene practices as a result of motivational activities.

Supported by Thames Water, the **small town** programme started work in three small towns, delivering services and introducing a rights-based approach. It is now working in Paikgacha in Khulna, Fulbaria in Mymensingh, Shakipur in Tangail, Kolaroa in Satkira and Faridpur. As well as water supply, sanitation and hygiene, the projects are promoting solid waste management and innovative decentralised wastewater treatment systems (DEWATS).

The **climate change** programme is a relatively new one, using a bottom up approach for climate change adaptation in WASH. The main targets for the programme are raising greater awareness on climate risk among key stakeholders, promoting community-based adaptation and introducing climate resilient technologies for water and sanitation. The programme has developed Participatory WASH Vulnerability Assessments which empower communities to raise their awareness, demand rights against climate risk and prepare their action plan for adaptation.

The **inclusion** programme is working with the most excluded and marginalised communities and breaking barriers to reach and convince people in the existing power structures to take action. Inclusion projects include the Tangail brothel and Tangail sweepers, Sylhet and Moulvibazaar tea gardens, claiming child rights for WASH, the Bandarban indigenous people, pavement dwellers and street children. Within the last year, resource centres were installed at the tea gardens and latrine and bathing complexes were installed in the brothel and sweeper colonies in Tangail. This has led to greater confidence in this new field.

The **influencing and enabling** programme is designed to continue WaterAid Bangladesh's influencing role to support both sustainable access to WASH services for poor and marginalised people and implementation of its regular thematic programmes. As such, the programme links closely with the two main technical non-programme policy and advocacy teams, resource mobilisation and operational learning. Through this programme, WaterAid Bangladesh seeks to develop strategic partnerships with other potential sector actors both at national and international levels.

### Findings: relevance

WaterAid Bangladesh has identified critical issues and sector blockages and has responded to them clearly in its programme work, which is closely aligned with the country and Global Strategies. Diversification has led to impressive innovation and whilst it is not yet clear how this innovation will be scaled up within future activities, this is clearly a period of good learning and the consequences will become better understood. WaterAid Bangladesh led the design of the 'hard to reach strategy, and were a leading part of the official review panel of the Sector Development Plan'. They also helped ensure that the draft Water Act (due for imminent ratification) includes Government acknowledgement that access to water is a human right.

WaterAid Bangladesh has become increasingly professional in its campaign and communication work. All programmes are looking to video and increasingly visual promotion of methodologies and of advocacy of activities and impacts. The criteria for selection of working locations are appropriate and are applied.

In rural areas, technologies are appropriate and good quality innovation means that solutions are evolving in response to growing water resource challenges. WaterAid Bangladesh has engaged in partnerships to develop innovations such as single source multiple platform deep tubewells, household and community rainwater harvesting and faecal sludge management.

Further attention is suggested for long-term water quality and water safety plan surveillance; exploration and promotion of technical solutions in the most challenging areas (eg coastal belt); community water security plans where water security is deteriorating; the impact of more relaxed cost sharing arrangements and development of consistent school WASH approaches.

In urban areas, construction is of good quality and improving all the time (eg small town mini piped water supply, shared toilets and brothel sanitation/shower blocks). The cost sharing approach is as relaxed as in the rural areas so it needs similar attention. Ways to improve sustainability of community sanitation in urban areas and schools also needs further attention. Good 'out of home' innovations are being made, such as mobile toilets and public drinking water points at stations (through corporate partnership).

In the inclusion programme, the pragmatic approach to working in the brothel (such as shifting to the adjacent sweeper community when things ground to a halt to demonstrate benefits, working with other programmes and engaging women from the brothel to work on the project) was excellent and the message of patience and lateral thinking is a strong one to promote.

There is evidence that in all projects, excluded groups were identified and targeted. Participation of these groups in focused projects (eg brothel workers, sweepers and children) was done in a meaningful way. It was not always clear how the most marginalised within mainstream programmes are participating at decision-making levels though they are certainly either included or specifically targeted for services.

At national Government level, WaterAid Bangladesh is recognised as a valuable partner and appreciated for its proactive contribution to the sector. National partners, such as the HYSAWA fund, also highly value WaterAid Bangladesh and view them as the leading agency for a rights-based approach in WASH. At local level, NGO partners are selected for comparative strengths and outreach and this approach has served WaterAid Bangladesh well for some years now. National and research partnerships are strong and international academic and consultancy expertise is sought as and when required. At the local level, partnerships have been built with communities and local government institutions, but do not include the private sector just now.

### **Findings: effectiveness**

Access is being achieved but it is not certain whether it is being sustained, especially access to community (hence, primarily urban) facilities. There is of course a long way to go for a rights-based approach but a journey has begun over the past two to three years. The shift requires a change in mindset from service provider to facilitator for staff and partners and the development and testing of new approaches at implementation and advocacy levels. As such, the adoption of a rights-based approach will still take considerable time to become fully embedded, but WaterAid Bangladesh has made significant progress in several of its programmes. The inclusion programme is helping to ensure ways by which communities or social groups that live in extremely marginalised, vulnerable or excluded situations may get access to WASH.

Service delivery effectiveness, in terms of quality of construction, types of service providers and longevity (operation and maintenance) as well as functionality and evidence for sustainability, is generally high. Construction quality is mostly good and

improving all of the time (eg number and quality of facilities accessible by disabled people, use of tiles in community latrines and rainwater harvesting systems in urban and rural locations). Service delivery varies significantly according to location (urban, small towns, rural) and these differences are well understood and managed by WaterAid Bangladesh and its partners. WaterAid Bangladesh's work for sustainability almost entirely satisfied WaterAid's own *Sustainability Framework* with relaxed attitudes to cost sharing being the main area of non-compliance.

WaterAid Bangladesh has built many strong, abiding and constructive partnerships between WASH providers and users. The effectiveness of partnerships is highest in those areas where access to safe water and sanitation is high on the list of priorities of target communities (for example, the safe water starved coastal belt and excluded communities). Effectiveness is less evident if target communities have other more pressing interests, such as land rights and electricity.

WaterAid Bangladesh has taken a systematic approach to developing sector capacity on a number of critical themes. A strong example is the way in which urban rainwater harvesting has been taken up through a number of linked initiatives, including analysis of groundwater and urban water problems, training of different players such as architects and the Government in partnership with CSE India, and advocacy to incorporate urban rainwater harvesting in the building code.

WaterAid Bangladesh have played a significant role in the development of new policy and effectively lobbied politicians, for example, to ensure that Government issued an order that *khash* ponds in water stressed areas in the south should be ring-fenced and used only for domestic water supply (included in the draft Water Act). WaterAid Bangladesh's national budget analysis and policy brief is being sought by sector partners and will help influence those seeking further financial support to the sector.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Whilst it is the opinion of the evaluation that WaterAid Bangladesh is delivering a relevant, effective and increasingly diverse and innovative programme, the nature of WaterAid evaluations means that it is specifically required to make recommendations on how improvements could be made. Recommendations are therefore made in relation to:

- Enhancing WaterAid Bangladesh's national profile and the effectiveness and clarity of advocacy work, including looking at how local level advocacy and community voice initiatives feed up to the national level.
- The current progress and future implementation of a rights-based approach. It is timely to do some analysis of the time and cost implications of moving from service provider to facilitator, the extent to which it is possible to introduce a rights-based approach (and what the possible milestones might be), and possible criteria for deciding whether in particular circumstances it might be more appropriate to provide services directly or to facilitate service delivery from the Government and other service providers.

- Balancing the delivery of targets for water and sanitation access with the sustainability of that access and reporting of this balance. For example, beneficiaries could be classified in terms of an 'A list' (direct water and sanitation beneficiaries accounted for in WASH targets), a 'B list' (hygiene and sanitation improvement beneficiaries not accounted for in WASH targets) and a 'C list' (WASH on the move – direct WASH beneficiaries outside of the home environment).
- Reviewing the urban programme, including exploring models from elsewhere in the world and wider WaterAid initiatives on urban reforms.
- Reviewing costs (both costs of alternative approaches and strategies for cost sharing).
- Enhancing the chances of sustainability, considering community and institutional facilities, water security, cost sharing and new technologies being piloted.
- How learning from innovations can be systematically undertaken and applied internally for improved programming and externally for influencing.
- How communication can be used strategically for profile and impact.
- Partnerships, including working relationships with sector partners and the private sector (for example, sanitation marketing).
- Human resources in WaterAid Bangladesh and partner organisations to support the delivery of the Country Strategy and ensure that staffing (through internal or external resources) supports the greatest priorities and capacity gaps, and human resources are balanced across programmes.